The terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September, 2001 and the United States’ response to those attacks with a total "war on terrorism," whose primary targets are individuals and groups that are affiliated with the Al-Qaeda network and its web of support which includes private persons, organizations, as well as states like Pakistan and Iraq, foreground questions regarding violence and its connection to politics that should not be addressed within old theoretical frameworks. As Mary Kaldor argues in New & Old Wars, such frameworks, elaborated during the development of modern states, in order to both explain and regulate their relations, are about "old wars" and do not fit the new global situation in which "new wars" that are different in kind from "old wars" are being fought.

According to Kaldor, "old wars" are marked by a set of distinctions such as the one between the "civil" and the "military." This distinction differentiates non-violent law abiding intercourse from violent struggle and is correlated with the opposition among "non-combatants," "combatants" who are the "legitimate bearers of arms," and "criminal bearers of arms." These two distinctions have presupposed a separation between the "internal" - what is within a well-defined state controlled territory - and the "external" - what is outside such territory, "state" and "non-state" activity, as well as the "economic" and the "political," all untenable under the current conditions of globalization. The pressures of globalization insofar as they lead to the disintegration of the set of distinctions that mark "old wars," begin to make sense of the "new wars," Kaldor suggests, because these "new wars" need to be understood as enacting the deconstruction of some of these very distinctions. Thus, what characterizes them is that they transgress the boundaries that have come to exist between the "civil" and the "military" in multiple forms which include a disdain for politics and its institutions, the privatization of armies, the criminalization of the war economy, and a particularly vicious targeting of non-combatant civilians.

Writing post 11 September, 2001, Kaldor identifies the terrorist attacks on the United States as belonging with the "new wars" and demonstrating rather graphically that "we live in an interdependent world, where we cannot maintain security merely through the protection of borders, where states no longer control what happens within their borders, and where old-fashioned war between states has become anachronistic." The "war on terrorism," declared and undertaken by the Bush government, Kaldor implies, is, therefore, obviously misguided since even though it is cognizant of its engagement in something new, it is, nonetheless, carried out along a paradigm that prioritizes military action that is pursued as if victory is possible, rather than a turn to global democratic politics and the necessary undertaking of and pledge to social justice that it entails.
The turn to global democratic politics, according to Kaldor, does not mean that no military action is needed in response to terrorism but that primacy is given to the legitimization of democratic political institutions. The importance of this, Kaldor believes, can be understood given an Arendtean or similar conceptions of political power which radically uncouple it from violence.\[6\]

II

In the late 1960's Hannah Arendt tackled the question of violence in a short book titled *On Violence*. She was motivated primarily by a concern with a transformation of the New Left which was shifting toward violence in its attempt to promote its political agenda. Arendt finds this choice curious and points out that it is taking place during a time that violence has become a rather "dubious and uncertain an instrument [...] in international relations,"\[7\] as a result of the "technological development of the implements of violence [that] has now reached the point where no political goal could conceivably correspond to their destructive potential or justify their use in armed conflict."\[8\] For Arendt, among the reasons to be concerned with this curious choice is that it is symptomatic. On the one hand, it signals a contradictory distancing from Marx, who, while thinking that violence is inherent in revolutionary changes, contra to a few yet not too many other Marxists, did not believe that "power grows out of the barrel of a gun." On the other hand, it signals a rapprochement with the Right for which "acts of terror" have been a kind of "prerogative."\[9\] Arendt believes that together these signals attest to an enormous confusion, which while intelligible in terms of the experiences of the twentieth century, must also be thought through extremely carefully since what is endangered is the very glimmer of hope that the New Left rebellion offers due to its global sweep and range,\[10\] and the scope of its ideas about and undertaking of "participatory" democracy.\[11\]

Arendt's thinking through the confusion that she identifies, because it is motivated by the mixing of politics with violence, centers no violence in general but specifically the question of violence in the political realm.\[12\] Although it involves the presentation of a set of analytic contrasts, the oppositions that she pin points are not simply stipulated but rather arise out of a reading of two traditions in political theory.\[13\] one equating "political power with the organization of violence," the other regarding the two as sharply different from each other.\[14\] The difference between the two concerns the very conceptualization of politics with one position offering a conception of politics that does while the other offers a conception of politics that does not identify political power with the ability to command obedience.\[15\]

Arendt first discusses this conception of political power in *The Human Condition* beginning with commentary on the importance of the experience of the Greek *polis*.\[16\] The *polis* is a political form of people being together and Arendt claims that for the Greeks "To be political, to live in a *polis*, meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence. In Greek self-understanding, to force people by violence, to command rather than persuade, were pre-political ways to deal with people characteristic of life outside the *polis*.\[17\] Implied by this conception are, according to Arendt, ideas of political power and government quite different from modern Western ideas that suggest that "the whole concept of rule and being ruled, of government and power in the sense in which we understand them as well as the regulated order attending them, was felt [by the Greeks] to be prepolitical."\[18\]

It is, of course, not all Greeks who felt this way and Arendt maintains that because the Greek *polis* embraced the political action of its citizens with an understanding of its destabilizing effects, it was always putting itself at risk due to the "haphazardness and moral irresponsibility inherent in the
plurality of agents, something that some took as quite intolerable. For Arendt, Plato provides a paradigmatic example of people suspicious of the *polis* and responding with an attempt to escape politics altogether through the introduction of the idea of "rule, that is the notion that men can lawfully and politically live together only when some are entitled to command and the others forced to obey."[20]

The entitlement to command and force others to obey rests, for Plato, on a divorce of knowing from doing that Arendt opines "has remained at the root of all theories of domination."[21] This divorce allows Plato and many after him to also believe that possessing the right kind of knowledge, one could design models for politics that political systems should realize. Political systems, then, could be fabricated. This, Arendt suggests, necessarily reintroduces violence into politics since instrumental violence is indispensable for fabrication because making always transforms and the transformation is destructive to what is being transformed.

Western modernity, according to Arendt, has experienced the brunt of the fusing of politics and violence due to the growing and perhaps even complete instrumentalization of politics. And Arendt notes,

> We are perhaps the first generation which has become fully aware of the murderous consequences inherent in a line of thought that forces one to admit that all means, provided that they are efficient, are permissible and justified to pursue something defined as an end. However, in order escape these beaten paths of thought it is not enough to add some qualifications, such as that not all means are permissible or that under certain circumstances means may be more important than ends. [...] As long as we believe that we deal with ends and means in the political realm, we shall not be able to prevent anybody's using all means to pursue recognized ends.[22]

Arendt has observed before a need for a different conceptualization of politics. In the introduction to the first edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* she states that "Antisemitism (not merely the hatred of the Jews), imperialism (not merely conquest), totalitarianism (not merely dictatorship) - one after the other, one more brutally than the other, have demonstrated that human dignity needs a new guarantee which can be found only in a new political principle."[23] For Arendt, totalitarianism shows most brutally the need to guarantee human dignity differently in part because, as in the Nazi case, it can be Antisemitic and imperialistic, and even more so, because totalitarianism represents a kind of mixture of politics with violence in which eventually violence overwhelms and eliminates politics altogether and it is this that "expels [man] from humanity" and renders human dignity meaningless.[24]

The kind of violence that totalitarianism favors is the terrorizing sort and it has rather distinctive characteristics when deployed by totalitarian regimes as distinguished from its deployments by, for example, the revolutionary societies of the nineteenth century. Its "victims are innocent"[25] or "harmless citizens" rather than persons whose positions come to symbolize oppression. [26] It is the counterpart of totalitarian propaganda till totalitarian rule which is a rule of violent terror is perfected and propaganda is not needed anymore.[27] And, instead of implementing a calculated policy, it becomes a vehicle for the expression of "frustration, resentment, and blind hatred" and forces "the recognition of one's existence on the normal strata of society,"[28] while undermining normality altogether.

A particularly distinctive characteristic of totalitarian violent terror, according to Arendt, is that it destroys human plurality, most extremely through the extermination of those who are different, but also by making individuality absolutely impossible.[29] Its logic is, then, not exclusionary, though it can be
manifested in exclusionary practices as fanatic and rabid as genocide, but is rather identitarian and embodied in practices that produce uniformity. Indeed, under totalitarianism the practices of violent terror that are intended to get rid of and stamp out any kind of variance are but a means in the generation of standardized sameness.

III

Arendt's discussion of totalitarian violent terror, because it involves a contrast with what she takes as a different kind of terrorist violence, can, I believe, be fruitfully used to think through perplexities regarding terrorism that Arendt herself did not discuss. These arise due to kind of realistic recognition, following, for example, the utilization of terrorism in the Algerian struggle against French colonialism, that terrorism is a potent weapon in the hands of those lacking military might, since it is hard to defend against and calls attention to the plight of the oppressed.[30] On the Left, this recognition has led to moral justifications of "revolutionary violence" or "revolutionary terrorism."[31]

Even if such justifications can be made to work as a means-ends kind of justification, Algerian style "revolutionary terrorism" is suspect if viewed from within an Arendtean framework. This is because just like totalitarian terrorism it targets "harmless citizens," disregarding them as individuals and instead construing one and all as members of a group identified as the "oppressor" and the "enemy." In other words, it is a terrorism that literalizes the symbolism attached to social position by nineteenth century revolutionaries recasting it as social location which is determined structurally. Social location in turn is used to construct a fictional unity among people who are taken merely as the members of some group. And group membership alone serves as the rationale for targeting for a terrorist attack.

At the same time, though, insofar as it aims at politics, in the sense that the post-terrorist future is at last intended to institute a new plurality inclusive of the "oppressed" who are liberated as a necessary condition of the possibility of the exercise of freedom, while there is a contradiction between the means and the ends of "revolutionary terrorism," it might not be thoroughly totalitarian. Still "revolutionary terrorism," can be entirely totalitarian and seems to have been tending that way, practiced as it is more and more by groups mobilized around some identity, be this religious, ethnic, or national, that is packaged ideologically.[32] These groups might use the justificatory language of "revolutionary terrorism," but their goals are not political. In particular, they are not intent on inclusive freedom.[33]

I think that the terrorism of 11 September, 2001, if Kaldor is indeed right and it belongs with the "new wars," fits nicely under the Arendtean conception of totalitarian violent terror. While it can and should be understood also in terms of a response to the United States' callous role in globalization and a protest against its arrogance,[34] it is, nonetheless, a terrorism whose purpose is the spread and institutionalization of an extreme and militant version of fundamentalist Islam exemplified by the Taliban regime of Afghanistan.

Arendt would have cautioned against a pacifist stance with regard to the current versions of totalitarian violent terror. She believed that at times politics must be combined with violence because violence cannot be stopped only with politics.[35] At the same time she would have also called for more politics, for more people coming together in freedom and in order to engage in political practices of freedom.

Arendtean like interventions are being made today by those recognizing the importance of the political sphere and the need to globalize democracy while radicalizing it.[36] But where extreme forms of
social injustice are experienced by many, it is easier to recruit the people who will enact the acts of totalitarian violent terror and as has been noted by many, just as politics without violence is unlikely to succeed as a response to totalitarian terrorism, neither would politics without social justice.

[6] Kaldor, , 114-115. Kaldor mentions Anthony Giddens as having a similar conception of power to Arendt's but gives no citation. Giddens' (Berkeley: University of California, 1987), a text in which Giddens discusses power and violence, propounds a different conception of power than that of Arendt. For a very current attempt to rely on and develop the Arendtean distinction between power and violence see Iris Marion Young "Power, Violence and Legitimacy: A Reading of Hannah Arendt in An Age of Police Brutality and Humanitarian Intervention" (forthcoming in , Nancy Rosenblum, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University).
[9] Arendt, , 11. While Arendt offers here an insightful reading of Marx, it is too deterministic and her claim regarding Right wing violence is inaccurate. See Walter Laqueur (Boston: Little Brown, 1977). Arendt exhibits here a forgetfulness of a history she knows well as her earlier discussions of terror indicate.
[13] Nancy C. M. Hartsock notes that Arendt does not simply read political theory as containing an alternative conceptualization of political power but actually reworks it herself and is among the women constructing a unique non-male conception of power. ( (Boston: Northeastern University, 1983), 210-230). Antonio Negri think that Arendt is on to something with her claims regarding the two different traditions in political theory, though he thinks that she is methodologically wrong and is also unclear about the alternative. ( ((Italian, 1992), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999), 14-24.
[16] Arendt has been accused of nostalgia for an idealized Greek polis which I do not think she has. But her description of the polis does gloss over problems. For a more complex view of the Greek polis with regards to the question of violence see David Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995). See also Arlene W. Saxonhouse (New York: Praeger, 1985), especially 17-36.
[18] Arendt, 32.
[27] Arendt, 344.
[31] The most striking example of this can be found in Jean Paul Sartre's preface to Franz Fanon's (French, 1961), New York: Grove, 1968), 7-34. Arendt addresses this preface in but is concerned mostly with the glorification of violence that Sartre seems to engage in and which is in part why his justification is striking. For a more subdued example of a Left justification of "revolutionary violence" or "revolutionary terrorism" see Kai Nielsen "Political Violence and Ideological Mystification," 13 (1982): 25-33.
[33] Laqueur, 81.
[34] For a general argument see Benjamin R. Barber (New York: Ballantine, 1995). For specific claims see Saskia Sassen "A Message From the Global South," , 12 September, 2001, http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archives